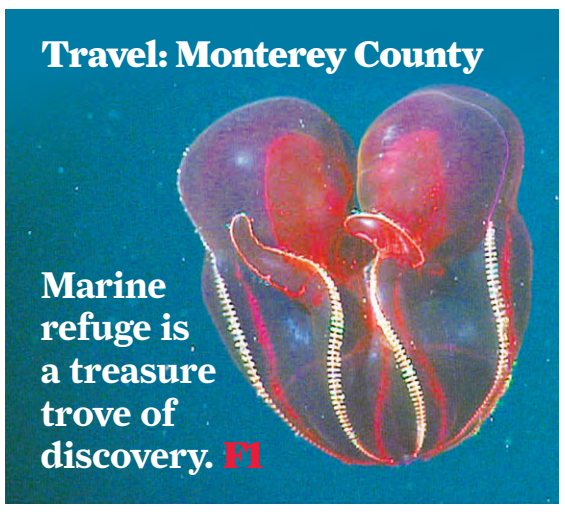

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CHRONICLE INVESTIGATION | FOLLOW-UP

Troubled charity faces audit

Nonprofit makes improvements, but state seeks financial and organizational data

By Cynthia Dizikes, Carolyne Zinko and Karen de Sá

The California attorney general's office has begun investigating a San Francisco charity that claimed to serve the developmentally disabled, after a Chronicle exposé that found the nonprofit veered from its mission for years, doing little more than funding its director's high-society lifestyle.

The rare audit by the state's top legal office is the most significant review of Helpers Community Inc.'s finances. It comes as the once-celebrated nonprofit is launching new efforts to house and train adults with developmental disabilities, including plans to reopen three former group homes that have been shuttered for 15 years.

In August, the $6 million charity fired its longtime director, San Francisco socialite Joy Venturini Bianchi, and hired a replacement amid a flurry of new grant-making.

"We are now trying to get back into direct care and our original mission," said the interim director, Jan Cohen, a consultant who has spent her career working with Bay Area nonprofits that serve individuals with disabilities.

Cohen said the attorney general's office requested financial and organizational materials from Helpers in October and that the nonprofit immediately

Helpers continues on A14

Photos by Carlos Avila Gonzalez / The Chronicle

New farmers' big challenge: finding land

By Jonathan Kauffman

Gillyflower Farm in Capay (Yolo County) is so new that owner Laura Reynolds has no tractors, employees or spare cash. By late fall, she has only planted one-third of her 1-acre plot. On harvest day for her weekly customer deliveries, which focus on greens and salad-friendly vegetables, she cools the produce in a generator-powered freezer that she unplugs before ice crystals form.

Agricultural and residential worlds intersect in rental field

The recent UC Davis grad and longtime farm intern does have good land, though, and the ear of her landlord, Sherri Wood, when problems arise. That's because Wood is building her house a few hundred feet away.

Reynolds is not alone in farming land in, essentially, someone else's yard — particularly in this state. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's August 2017 Land Values Summary, the average price per acre of farmland in California was $8,700, among

Agriculture continues on A18

Top and above: Laura Reynolds harvests and bags greens for her Gillyflower Farm startup. The new farmer rents an acre in Capay (Yolo County) in a modern twist on sharecropping.

GOP tax bills could shield firms' profits made abroad

By Carolyn Lochhead

WASHINGTON — Silicon Valley multinationals such as Apple and Google that are already sheltering hundreds of billions of dollars in overseas tax havens may pay little or no U.S. tax on future overseas profits under legislation Republicans are racing to enact.

It's been largely overlooked amid controversies over how the new tax bills would affect households, but a wholesale change in the way the federal government would tax foreign profits is at the core of the GOP tax overhaul that the House passed this month and the Senate could approve in its own version this week.

Currently, the U.S. government taxes foreign earnings at the same 35 percent corporate rate charged on domestic profits, but only when the foreign earn-

Revenue continues on A10

S.F. reports recreational pot hazards

By Erin Allday

Just weeks before recreational pot becomes legal in California, San Francisco public health officials have published a report on their best guesses for problems that could arise from widespread marijuana use, including abuse of the drug by young people and unforeseen health risks among adults.

The challenge, authors of the report noted, will be warning new users about the hazards of cannabis consumption — like the possibility of overdosing or driving under the influence — without straying into fearmongering.

The report takes no stand for or against legalization, which was adopt-

Cannabis continues on A16

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